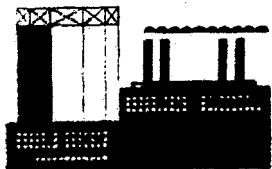




# EPA BASIC

# BROWNFIELDS

## Fact Sheet



### What is a brownfield?

Brownfields are abandoned, idled or under-used industrial and commercial sites where expansion or redevelopment is complicated by real or perceived environmental contamination that can add cost, time or uncertainty to a redevelopment project. Sites that once provided economic vitality and jobs to urban communities are now avoided by new industry, developers and lenders. A brownfield site may be as small as the vacant 1/4 acre corner gas station with remaining underground storage tanks, or as large as a several hundred acre abandoned factory that may have dumped wastes on its property. Estimates show that there may be as many as 450,000 brownfield sites across the country.

One of the many factors that may be an obstacle to redevelopment is environmental contamination. Prospective developers and owners are fearful they will be held liable for the costs associated with the clean up of contamination, even if they were not involved in the contamination of the property. Banks are often reluctant to issue loans on brownfield properties because of liability concerns or the fear that the clean-up costs will exceed the value of the property.

### Why is brownfield redevelopment important?

Redeveloping brownfields is important because it links economic vitality and jobs with environmental protection. Recycling brownfields into productive use discourages urban sprawl while retaining or creating new jobs for the surrounding communities. Previously abandoned properties are returned to the tax base which further serves to increase neighborhood economic vitality. In addition, brownfields are often "eyesores" so their redevelopment improves the appearance of the surrounding community.

## **How are the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the states working together to encourage brownfield redevelopment?**

EPA and state governments recognize that successful brownfield redevelopment can best occur when state and local governments, community groups and the private sector work together to solve problems that combine environmental clean up, urban planning, and economic redevelopment. A major reason that redevelopment projects are often halted is the fear of liability in clean-up costs. To address this, EPA has formed partnerships with its' states in Region 5 to more effectively communicate liability issues, increase understanding of environmental risks, and to educate local governments, communities, and the private sector about brownfields redevelopment.

In recent years, states have developed voluntary cleanup programs which are designed to provide liability protection to private parties that clean up brownfields sites. Even though the federal government may have little or no legal interest in most brownfield sites, EPA is taking steps to diminish the fear of liability under federal laws by modifying existing agreements with states that have voluntary cleanup programs. Through these modified agreements, EPA fully supports state cleanup programs and essentially pledges that the successful cleanup of a site under the state's program will also satisfy EPA. Illinois, Indiana, Wisconsin and Minnesota have signed such an agreement with EPA, Region 5. Similar changes to the agreements with Michigan and Ohio are anticipated in the near future.

## **What other avenues is EPA pursuing to promote redevelopment of brownfields?**

EPA supports the important role that state and local governments share in economic redevelopment and is committed to finding opportunities to forge partnerships at the federal, state, and local levels to encourage the redevelopment of brownfields. EPA is working with states and municipalities to develop and issue guidances that will clarify the liability of prospective purchasers, lenders, property owners, and others regarding their association with activities at a site.

In addition, EPA will fund 50 brownfield demonstration pilots by the end of 1996. These pilots, each funded for up to \$200,000 over a two-year period, are designed to support creative site assessment, clean-up and redevelopment solutions. Special efforts will be directed toward removing regulatory barriers without sacrificing environmental protection, and toward creating public/private sector partnerships at the federal, state, and local levels.

In Region 5, the demonstration pilots to date include: Cities of Detroit, MI; Indianapolis, IN; Cleveland, OH (Cuyahoga County Planning Commission); suburban Chicago (the West Central Municipal Conference); and Northwest Indiana (cities of East Chicago, Gary, Hammond). There are also regional brownfield pilots underway with Illinois, Indiana, and Minnesota state environmental agencies. In addition, EPA staff have been assigned to three cities and regional brownfield team members are available to provide assistance (see below).

## **What other issues are linked to brownfields?**

Environmental justice and pollution prevention (P2) are two of the many issues that are linked to brownfields. In urban areas, many lower income or minority communities are concerned about multiple pollution sources that may expose residents to unacceptable amounts of environmental contamination. These communities want plans that promote both economic redevelopment and environmental justice initiatives. Brownfield redevelopment must proceed in a way that does not compromise the environmental health and well-being of local residents.

Pollution prevention (P2) promotes the development of more efficient manufacturing practices which generate less pollution and which ultimately lowers pollution-control costs. Consideration of P2 is an important part of a brownfield redevelopment project. P2 not only results in lower manufacturing costs, but it also promotes cleaner and more efficient redevelopment of a site. P2 practices encourage sustainable land use redevelopment and reduce the likelihood of a redeveloped site becoming another brownfield.

### **For further information**

General information on regional brownfields pilots and EPA guidances are available through **EPA Region 5 Hotline: 1-800-621-8431 (IL, IN, MI, MN, OH, WI).**

Need Further Assistance?

#### ***Region 5 Brownfields Team Contacts:***

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*Joe Dufficy 312-886-7255 (State activities)*

*Andrew Warren 312-353-5485 (Legal issues)*

#### ***Region 5 State Contacts:***

*Illinois - Gary King 217-785-9407 or Steve Colantino 217-785-3497*

*Indiana - Gabriele Hauer 317-233-6429*

*Michigan - Claudia Kerbawy 517-335-3397*

*Minnesota - Ken Haberman 612-296-0892*

*Wisconsin - Cara Norlund 608-267-0540*

*Ohio - Jennifer Kwasneiwski 614-644-2279*

**At the local level you are encouraged to contact your City Planning Department or regional planning commission.**